

METHAMPHETAMINE

THE DRUG EPIDEMIC OF THE 90'S

Methamphetamine, also called "crystal" and "crank" has been around for years, but its popularity appears to be growing in trend-setting California, according to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

"The most common drug that law enforcement here is finding is methamphetamine. It's cheap and readily available," said Mike Heald, a DEA agent from San Francisco.

"The new dealers are Henry Fords," Mr. Heald

said. "They have introduced a division of labor so certain groups acquire the chemicals, others make it and still others distribute it," he said.

In the old days, a seizure meant a few pounds of chemicals. Today, the Fresno and Sacramento offices of DEA routinely seize 100-pound batches. Seizures in northern California were up 150 percent between 1993 and 1994.

PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS



The production and abuse of the narcotic methamphetamine have reached epidemic proportions in California, fast becoming the “crack” of the 1990s. While methamphetamine is a nationwide problem affecting rich and poor alike, its impact is disproportionately felt in California.

FACT: The DEA has identified California as a “source country” for methamphetamine, much like Colombia is for cocaine, with more than 90% of all the nation’s methamphetamine from 1993-1994 originating in California.

FACT: Amphetamine abuse – of which methamphetamine is a category – has skyrocketed in several California counties by more than 1000%, according to the Public Statistics Institute.

The Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996 is an effort to curb the production and abuse of this dangerous drug. The legislation:

- ◆ **establishes new controls over key chemicals necessary to manufacture methamphetamine;**
- ◆ **increases the criminal sentences for possession and distribution of these chemicals or possession of the specialized equipment used to make methamphetamine.**

This brochure was made to help you understand the growing problem of methamphetamine in California and throughout the country, and summarizes the Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act. With the combined efforts of federal, state and local governments, we can begin to address this serious problem. I welcome your input and ideas toward this end.

FACTS ABOUT METHAMPHETAMINE

Methamphetamine, also known as “**speed**” or “**crank**,” is a narcotic which is **highly addictive**, much **cheaper** than cocaine, and has significantly **longer lasting** effects, by some 8 to 10 hours, compared to cocaine. Methamphetamine’s street value is as little as \$3,000 per pound (about the size of a brick), while the price of cocaine is roughly \$11,000 per pound.

Methamphetamine comes in multiple forms and can be **smoked, snorted or injected**. Methamphetamine is **habit forming** and users develop tolerances that lead to higher and more frequent doses.

The price of methamphetamine is largely determined by the **availability of ephedrine**, a key ingredient. Regulation of ephedrine, and its resulting unavailability, has increased its wholesale price. As a result, industrious drug traffickers have switched to less-regulated and more economic substitutes such as **pseudoephedrine, phenylpropanolamine, and ephedrine combination products**. This change will ultimately reduce the cost of methamphetamine.



A drug lab, seized by the DEA, filled with the equipment used to make methamphetamine.

VIOLENCE AND DEATH: METHAMPHETAMINE'S FATAL RESULTS

Does methamphetamine contribute to violent crime and death? **Absolutely.** Law enforcement officials in California and throughout the United States attribute rising methamphetamine abuse to increases in emergency room admissions and violent crimes.

- ◆ **More than 1,800 deaths** were caused by methamphetamine abuse from 1992 to 1994 -- **a 145% increase in just two years**, and there were 17,665 methamphetamine-related emergency room admissions nationwide in 1994.
- ◆ **California emergency rooms experienced a 366% increase** in admissions related to methamphetamine abuse from 1983 to 1993. In 1994 alone, such admissions increased 49% -- **the largest one-year jump ever in California.**
- ◆ **Nearly 3,000 methamphetamine users entered drug treatment centers** in 1994 alone in the San Francisco and San Diego regions. Today, methamphetamine admissions are increasing at twice the rate of cocaine.

SACRAMENTO COUNTY

1,117 people were arrested in 1995 on methamphetamine charges -- three times the arrests as for cocaine, marijuana and heroin combined.

CONTRA COSTA COUNTY

Local law enforcement report methamphetamine was a factor in 89% of domestic disputes in Contra Costa County.

SAN BERNARDINO

365 methamphetamine labs were closed in 1995 by local Sheriff's Deputies, and 250 more were shut down in the first half of 1996.

ORANGE COUNTY

49 methamphetamine labs were closed in 1995, and 59 more were seized by September of 1996.

RIVERSIDE

175 methamphetamine labs have been closed as of August 1996, 58 more than in all of 1995. A lab explosion in December 1995 killed 3 small children.

SAN DIEGO

In just half of 1996, narcotics agents closed 51 labs, 15 more than were closed in all of 1995.



How METHAMPHETAMINE IS MADE: IT'S EASY

Methamphetamine production does not require huge growing fields or sophisticated technology. It can be cooked up by just about anybody in makeshift labs hidden in mobile homes, isolated farms and even motel rooms. With a postage stamp and a few \$100 bills, someone can get all the raw materials needed to make a batch of methamphetamine in two days that could produce a handsome profit of thousands of dollars.

AVAILABILITY OF INGREDIENTS

The key ingredient of methamphetamine is ephedrine, a tightly controlled substance. Because of the difficulty in obtaining ephedrine legally, drug dealers have turned to less-regulated substitutes, pseudoephedrine, found in many over-the-counter medicines, and ephedrine combination products, which can be processed to remove the buffers and produce ephedrine.

Hydriotic acid is a chemical necessary to manufacture methamphetamine. While hydriotic acid is strictly controlled, it can be easily created by combining two ingredients -- red phosphorous and iodine -- which are not uniformly regulated. So drug dealers simply make cash purchases of these chemicals in large quantities to manufacture methamphetamine.

CHEMICAL MANUFACTURERS

Most chemical manufacturers and distributors follow responsible business practices. According to the DEA, **just seven California companies are responsible for the cash sales of 95% of iodine and red phosphorous in the state.** These companies are solely responsible for \$10.9 of the \$11 million of chemical cash sales. As a matter of fact, over the last three years, cash sales of iodine have ballooned by more than 978 %, and red phosphorous cash sales have seen a 226% increase. Most of these transactions were for quantities greater than 100 pounds, a strong indicator that they are being used in methamphetamine production.

COMPREHENSIVE METHAMPHETAMINE CONTROL ACT OF 1996

Because there are no quantity limitations or uniform reporting requirements for iodine and red phosphorous -- chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine -- law enforcement's ability to trace these chemicals is severely handicapped.

The **Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996** establishes new controls over key chemicals and strengthens criminal penalties for possession and distribution of these chemicals.

CHEMICAL CONTROLS

The legislation will:

1. **Restrict access to precursor chemicals used to make methamphetamine.** Chemicals such as **iodine** and **hydrochloric gas**, used to make methamphetamine, would be added to the Chemical Diversion and Trafficking Act (CDTA), thereby requiring purchasers of significant quantities of the chemicals above a determined threshold to provide their name, address and other information at the time of sale.

The legislation also tightens controls on the sale of methamphetamine precursors **pseudoephedrine, phenylpropanolamine, and ephedrine combination products**, all common ingredients in over-the-counter diet pills and cold medicines. Large quantity purchases of ephedrine combination products in bottles or blister packs of more than 24 grams -- the equivalent of 488 cold tablets -- must be reported to the DEA, as would purchases of pseudoephedrine and phenylpropanolamine bottles totaling more than 24 grams.

2. **Track mail-order purchases of precursor chemicals.** Currently, no restrictions exist on sales of ephedrine, pseudoephedrine or phenylpropanolamine through the mail. This legislation requires monthly reporting of mail-order transactions to the Attorney General.
3. **Crack down on chemical supply companies** that recklessly sell chemicals to persons using them to make methamphetamine by imposing a fine of up to \$250,000 for a first offense; a fine of \$250,000 or up to double the last previously imposed penalty, whichever is greater, for any succeeding violation; and gives the Attorney General the authority to shut down a company.

CRIMINAL PENALTIES

In addition to establishing new chemical controls, the legislation strengthens penalties for possession and distribution of listed chemicals and production paraphernalia.

Specifically, the legislation will:

1. Double the maximum criminal penalty to 20 years for possession of chemicals or equipment used to make methamphetamine. Such equipment includes a triple-neck, round bottom flask and other specialized equipment that has no purpose other than to make methamphetamine.
2. Increase penalties for trafficking and manufacturing methamphetamine or its precursor chemicals.

INTERNATIONAL DRUG EFFORTS

Most chemicals used to make methamphetamine (such as ephedrine) are tightly controlled in the U.S. but are illegally smuggled into this country from other countries. This legislation:

1. Directs the Attorney General to coordinate international drug enforcement efforts to reduce trafficking in methamphetamine and its precursor chemicals.
2. Makes it a crime, with a maximum 10-year penalty, to manufacture precursor chemicals outside the U.S. with the intent to smuggle them into the country.

CLEAN UP ASSISTANCE

Methamphetamine and the chemicals used to make it aren't just dangerous to a user's health. Red phosphorus becomes explosive at high temperatures, vapors of hydrochloric acid singe the lungs and can permeate walls so badly that buildings often become condemned, and toxic acids are dumped down drains or buried in yards -- all dangers to anyone living unsuspectingly close to a lab. These labs can cost as much as \$8,000 to clean up.

This legislation allows courts to order restitution for the costs associated with the clean up of methamphetamine labs and for any person injured as a result of the lab's operation.

PREVENTION AND TREATMENT

This legislation creates a Methamphetamine Interagency Task Force comprised of Department of Justice and Health and Human Services officials and drug-treatment experts to design and implement methamphetamine education, prevention and treatment strategies. The bill creates an advisory board to educate chemical companies to identify suspicious transactions.



The production and use of methamphetamine have reached all time highs. No longer just a pastime for outlaw motorcycle gangs, methamphetamine is now in cities rich and poor, urban and rural, throughout the country. Its cheap cost, simple production and availability are contributing factors to the growing methamphetamine epidemic.

By increasing the regulation of raw materials necessary to produce methamphetamine and strengthening criminal sentences for possession of key chemicals and paraphernalia, the Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996 limits the access methamphetamine manufacturers have to the chemicals necessary to produce this poison and will help provide law enforcement with the tools needed to combat it.

The Comprehensive Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996 is a bipartisan effort by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Joseph Biden (D-DE) and Charles Grassley (R-IA). The legislation passed unanimously in Congress and was signed into law by President Clinton in October, 1996.

USA Today
September 7, 1995

'Meth' use in the '90s: A growing 'epidemic'

Stimulant fuels many in 'fast lane'

By Robert Davis
USA TODAY

When Eric Smith tossed his
14-year-old son's head out of
his van window onto a
Mexico highway
last month

"We're seeing more labs in
middle America," says John
Conoco, the Drug Enforcement
Administration's meth-
amphetamine task force
chief. "It's an epidemic that's
getting worse."

Meth is in the '90s what co-
caine was in the '80s or LSD
was in the '70s.
Americans
out in the

Paranoia about the drug,
calls meth "the drug that li-
berates the gears of capital-
ism. People work harder and
faster. It works for their lives
and they continue
to study
when

found cooks
in California
And
their

Fresno Bee
November 28, 1995

Meth dealing explodes in Valley

■ Hospital emergency room
admissions in Central
California skyrocket.

Los Angeles Times
December 27, 1995

Three Children Die in Apparent Drug Lab Blast

By SHAWN HUBLER
and NIESON HIMMEL
TIMES STAFF WRITERS

Three toddlers burned to death
and three adults were seriously
injured Tuesday when an explosion
in an apparent methamphetamine
lab blew up a trailer in the scrubby
hills - a Temecula authori-

Washington Times
July 5, 1995

'Crank' becomes scourge of West

Drug officials fear
a national trend

By Peter Copeland
SOCIETY SCIENCE NEWS SERVICE

A made-in-the-USA drug has re-
placed imported cocaine as the
choice of young people in Califor-
nia, prompting drug officials to
warn of a coming national trend.
Methamphetamine, also called
"crystal" and "crank," has been
but its pop-
ularity

Los Angeles Times
March 13, 1995

California's Illicit Farm Belt Export

■ The nation's booming
methamphetamine trade is
fed by mobile labs
throughout the state's rural
areas. Mexican drug
families have replaced biker
gangs as masterminds of the
elusive network.

By
RAX
MAN

From the office of
U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein
331 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510